

WEB 2: IMPERFECT BUT LOVABLE

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Along with many other readers of Word Ways, I am a staunch admirer of Merriam-Webster's Second Edition. Unlike the austere and hospital-sterile Third Edition (the same genus, but a different species), it offers almost endless scope for the browser or the collector of curiosa. The things that most charm me can be broadly classified in two categories: inconsistencies or outright errors, and interesting definitions.

In view of the fact that past issues of Word Ways are replete with comments on Websterian errors, it may seem unnecessary to devote an entire article to this subject. However, since most of these comments were offered as off-the-cuff tidbits, I see the need for a more comprehensive list. I have deliberately omitted from my list all items which, to my knowledge, have already been noted in Word Ways.

My copy of Merriam-Webster's Second Edition was printed in 1959; I trust that the majority of the items presented below can be found in other printings as well. After each word, the page and column (B for entries below the line) are given to help the reader locate it.

Fasten your seat-belts!

- APIKE (124 B) Shown as variant of APYKE. To learn more, one would expect to find it at APYKE. But ... it does not appear!
- BAROGRAF (221 B) This reformed spelling should not be capitalized. Its base word, BAROGRAPH, is not.
- BAW- (234 2) One is referred to BAU-. With high excitement, one looks there ... only to be referred back to BAU-!
- BIT (275 B) Shown as variant of the adjective BITE. Nowhere does the word BITE appear in adjectival form.
- BLABBER (277 B) Shown as variant of BLUBBERERS. The singular form, BLUBBERER, must have been intended; no plural is listed.
- CAALD (369 B) Shown as variant of COLD. As such, it should not be initially capitalized.
- COFFA (519 B) A true "fun" word ... shown as a variant of itself!
- SCHAGIV (522 2) This entry (in Table of Coins) is not listed in its normal vocabulary position, as other coins in the Table are. In fact, this elusive coin is not listed in Webster's Third, Funk & Wagnalls, or the Century Dictionary!

CORDICEPS (591 B) Just to keep things in balance, this word should be initially capitalized ... it's a variant of the genus CORDYCEPS.
 COROPO (596 2) We are told "See GOYATACAN". I would love to see it ... but, it's nowhere listed.

CRAWDOWN (619 B) Variant of CRADDEN. But don't bother to seek the latter ... it's not there.

DHARMA (716 3) Text reads: "Law; that is religious law; .." Don't you think that can be improved grammatically?

ELEGANT (829 1) In the closing SYN listings, I, for one, would be happier with a comma between GRACEFUL and REFINED.

FEIGN (929 B) Shown as variant of FLAN. Chances are, FAIN was intended ... there is no FIAN!

FIONNUALA (951 B) Shown as variant of FINOLA. A great point to know ... but, there is no FINOLA.

FORESIGN (989 2) Defined as "FORTOKEN". There's little doubt but that FORETOKEN is intended.

GEMINATION (1043 1) In definition b, I've gotten quite accustomed to "OOTH PULP". But, in the name of progress, they'll probably correct it.

GENTILE (1047 B) Shown as variant of GENTILLE. An excellent point ... but the latter is not listed.

GOB (1072 1) Web II follows the practice of listing practically all Biblical names below the line, unless there is suitable descriptive text to warrant appearance above the line. GOB, plus others that follow, represent the small mysterious minority. Why?

GOLILIA (1077 B) Shown as variant of GOLILLA ... but where is the latter word?

HOMAM (1191 2) Like GOB, this Biblical term is above the line.

HOOFROT (1197 B) Not only does it refer us to HOOF ROT, but specifically to the second meaning of HOOF ROT. Forget about the second ... where is the first?

HORD (1200 B) A variant, among others, of ORD. Where does the latter appear?

IRON (1311 1) Yet another Biblical term above the line!

JEMSHID (1332 B) Shown as variant of JAMSCHID. Latter does not appear with such a spelling.

JUBARTAS (1343 B) Shown as variant of GIBARTAS. No such word. Could they mean GIBBARTAS (whale)?

KHONSU (1361 1) Is partially defined as "member of the Theban triad". Now, I've always been thirsty to know more about that triad. But I'll have to go beyond Web II; it can't be found.

MAHOW (1482 B) This is a variant of MAGOU, which follows the principle of being unfindable.

MELAMPOD (1530 3) Defined as MELANPODIUM, whereas MELAMPODIUM is obviously intended.

MELL (1532 2) In definition a, we learn it is "A hammer or mallet, esp of wood beetle". Rather than straining to conjure up a visual picture of wood beetles using hammers ... I'd be happier seeing

a semicolon inserted properly between "wood" and "beetle".

- MERIDIAN (1539 3) The definition given for the intransitive verb, "To come to its or a meridian", has already provoked many a sleepless night. Is there a basic celestial truth embodied here ... or merely words omitted?
- MICRORHOPIAS (1554 1) Not only is this a genus of ant urens, but we are referred to ANT UREN for more information. But in what dictionary? Not in Web II ... for it doesn't appear.
- MISHONGNOVI (1570 B) We are asked to "See HOPI", presumably to add to our knowledge. But ... nowhere at HOPI will you find mention of MISHONGNOVI.
- MISSHAPEN (1571 1) To fully understand this word, we look at the final line for SYN ... to find that MISSHAPEN is a synonym for itself!
- MOLAVEE (1579 B) Indicated as variant of MOOLVEE. The old familiar story ... the latter's not listed.
- MONOLOCULAR (1586 3) It is fully defined as UNILOCULAR. So, to fully grasp its meaning, one need only refer to the latter. But, it appears only as one of many under UNI-.
- MOPAN (1592 B) We are invited to "See 3rd MAYA, 2". "Tain't so ... it appears at 2nd MAYA, 2.
- MOTHEN (1598 B) Just for the sake of orderliness, I wish to see a semicolon between "moth" and "moth-eaten".
- NAIK (1624 1) Definition c invites us to NAYAK. Not in Merriam-Webster, though ... it doesn't appear.
- NAKOMGILISALA (1624 B) We are referred to NAWITI. By now, are you surprised to learn that the latter is not listed?
- NANNINOSE (1625 B) Shown as variant of MANINOSE, which is not listed. I suspect a misspelling in one or the other, but am no longer sufficiently concerned to care which.
- NINTU (1654 B) Come on, now, Merriam ... this is a goddess. Let's show sufficient courtesy to give her name an initial capital!
- ORCHAMUS (1714 B) I can see a trend developing. This is a king ... let's grant him capitalization too.
- OUTWARD (1736 1) In definition 3 for the adjective, let's quibble and demand a semicolon rather than a comma prior to "patent".
- OUTWALE (1736 1) The definition given is intriguing. But, to me, it's senseless, based on all the meanings Merriam-Webster assigns to "past" as a noun.
- PATTY (1794 3) With a little straining, I can accept PATTY as a diminutive of MARTHA, or even MATILDA ... but must we overlook something so obvious as PATRICIA?
- PAU (1794 3) See GOB, earlier.
- PEROUN (1825 B) Shown as variant of PERUN (PERKN). For the latter, I'll give you three-to-one, and first shot, that they really mean PERKUN.
- PHARMUTHI (1837 B) Rank discrimination, Merriam. Let's initially capitalize it, as we have all other Egyptian months.
- PHYMATORHYSIN (1852 1) Merriam-Webster stuttered at this point.

This word is repeated ... in identical form.

- PIBESETH (1855 B) Refers to BUBASTIS which does not appear in Vocabulary section. Reference should be made to Gaz, as is standard elsewhere.
- PI-GOW (1861 B) Shown as variant of PIEGOW. Close ... but no cigar! Latter should be hyphenated as PIE-GOW.
- PILANDITE (1861 3) We are referred to HATHERLITE. Why? No mention made there of PILANDITE.
- PRECORACOID (1945 1) Entry word is listed solely as adj. Yet definition b is purely nominative in tone.
- PRESIDENT (1956 2) In definition 2 appears "presiding genus". It must be admitted (even though it be with tears in the current era) that this word should correctly appear as GENIUS.
- PUME (2011 B) We are referred to YARURO. Yet, reading will indicate that it should be YARURA.
- ROCK HOPPER (2159 1) In text, CRESTED PENQUIN should quite obviously be CRESTED PENGUIN.
- ROTASCOPE (2171 B) The reader is invited to see GYROSCOPE. I feel let down when no mention is made there of ROTASCOPE.
- SAMSIEN (2210 B) There's no justification for initial capitalization.
- SCOPOLA (2241 B) Shown as variant of SCOPOLIA. One might guess ... the latter is not listed.
- SCRAMPUM (2245 B) Refers to SCRIMPUM SCRAMPUN ... which should be SCRIMPUM SCRAMPUM.
- SELINUTINE (2272 2) Defined as "pertaining to Selinus", which we might have guessed. But, doesn't it follow that SELINUS should be listed somewhere?
- SHAMEFUL (2301 3) In definition 3, I suggest we'll all sleep easier with a semicolon between "indecent" and "scandalous".
- SENSIFACIENT (2279 2) We've reached the acme! One of my pets. No definition whatsoever!
- SHEAR (2305 3) In definition 1b, to make certain we get the point, the word "mince" is repeated.
- SHEPPER (2310 B) Wrong font of type for SHAPER. Picky-picky!
- SKEWED (2353 3) SHEWBALD should certainly be SKEWBALD.
- SLING (2365 2) The definition of the 7th SLING exactly duplicates that of definition 3 of the 1st SLING.
- SNIGGERING (2381 1) Adverbial form appears as SNIGGORINGLY. Should certainly be SNIGGERINGLY.
- SOLIDEO (2394 B) I'm told to "See ZUCCHETTO". I did. No reference made there to SOLIDEO.
- SOMME (2397 B) Shown as variant of SAMN. At the risk of boring you ... the latter is not listed.
- SOUND (2403 2) Among the Combinations which close the adjectival definition, SOUNDHEARTEDNES would look neater with another "S".
- STEAN (2466 2) For variety, let's drop a different letter this time. How about the "A" from RECEPTACLE?

- STOMOXYS (2482 2) As a genus, let's grant it the customary initial capitalization.
- STRONGYL- (2500 B) Refers to STRONGYLO-. I would now expect the latter to be separately listed as a prefix. No ... it can only be inferred from the other listings.
- SWEETEN (2548 2) In definition 5b, we now find the semicolon that was needed earlier. Let's replace it by a comma here.
- SYDDIR (2554 B) Shown as variant of CIDAR. So what's new? Latter is not listed.
- SYMMELIA (2555 B) We are referred to SIRENOMELIA. Where, pray tell?
- THALASSO (2615 1) In the cause of neatness, let's add a hyphen to this combining form.
- TOL-LOL (2662 1) Here's that missing hyphen! It appears unnecessarily in the adjective form, which should be TOL-LOLISH.
- TRASHRACK (2696 B) You are referred to 8th RACK, 6. May I suggest you'll have better luck at 9th RACK?
- ULUA (2755 B) We are referred to ULVA. But ... which one? Both seem likely candidates.
- URENT (2803 2) We were seeking a missing "S" a few words ago. It can be found here as excess baggage in BURNINGS.
- VD. (2822 3) Should properly appear as VD-.
- VERBENARIUS (2831 B) I'm asked to see FETIALES. I did ... in vain ... no mention of VERBENARIUS.
- WACHE (2862 B) We are told it's a variant of WAUGH, meaning "wave". Yet, nowhere at WAUGH will you find the meaning "wave" indicated.
- WELL (2901 3) In the list of Combinations appears WELL-PATRONIZ. An interesting spelling ... but will it pass muster?
- WITNESS (2942 1) Among final SYN listings for this verb, I suggest that BEHOLD should replace BEHELD.
- WITTEAGEMOTE (2942 B) Shown as variant WITNAGEMOTE. You guessed it ... the latter is not listed.

In the foregoing list, I've over-reacted to the presence of some Biblical names appearing above the line in the Vocabulary, without supporting text. There is a reason, which can be deduced; they appear so only when there is a normal Vocabulary entry of the same spelling. I don't want to besmirch G. C. Merriam unduly, although I don't think this fact is made sufficiently clear in the prefatory pages.